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ABSTRACT

Despite the legal mandate for fulltime school participation between the ages of 6 and 18 and the mandate for high school completion, many youths do not fulfill these expectations and are viewed as dropouts. To investigate the characteristics of seventh and eighth grade students who leave school and the reasons why they do so, school personnel in 39 Ohio school districts were interviewed through phone calls and selected school visits. These districts accounted collectively for 94.5 percent (N=436) of seventh grade dropouts and 87.3 percent (N=670) of eighth grade dropouts in the state. Although discrepancies in local district data collection methodologies and definitions of a dropout were found, it was established that the largest single category of dropouts were those individuals whom the school districts could not locate. The reasons students left school included expulsion, pregnancy, being over age for grade, institutionalization, running away, and several other low incidence reasons, e.g., marriage, family responsibility, parent request, and military service. Educator observations on why students leave school include lack of family support for education, troubled homes, and "low normal" intelligence. Improvements in record keeping, disciplinary practices, particularly in regard to expulsion, programs for pregnant teenagers and teenage parents, and additional attention to special academic needs should be undertaken to remedy dropout problems. (Appendices include the data collection form and a detailed report from the Cleveland School District listing dropout data by race, age, and sex). (BL)

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SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE DROPOUTS IN OHIO:

RESEARCH ON WHO THEY ARE, WHY THEY LEAVE AND HOW SCHOOL DISTRICTS COUNT THEM

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INTRODUCTION

Children Out of School in Ohio

Ohio law expresses the public's commitment to school participation by all Ohio youth. The State's compulsory education law requires that all children between ages six and 18 participate in school, and makes available to youth a free public education to the age of 21.

Despite the legal mandate for full-time school participation and high school completion, many Ohio youth do not participate fully. First, many students are enrolled in school but do not attend regularly. Second, many schools exclude children for extended periods of time (from a day to a semester) as a form of punishment. Finally, a significant number of youth drop out without graduating from high school. Many dropouts leave school for reasons that are permissible under Ohio law. Those reasons include reaching the age of 18, being at least 16 years old and having a job, or being excused by the superintendent for three reasons described in the law. Some students leave school for reasons that are not permitted by law. In either case, there are students who have not fulfilled the expectation of completing high school and are viewed as dropouts.

Students who drop out of school for both legal and illegal reasons are a concern to the Citizens' Council for Ohio Schools. The Council has monitored this problem and other participation issues over the last six years. As part of this effort, the Council has issued a number of public reports analyzing and reporting to the public about the quantitative information that the Ohio Department of Education collects from the 615 school

districts in Ohio on the number of students who drop out each year.[1]

The State Department data on dropouts indicates that a large number of students leave school prematurely each year in Ohio. In 1980-81, the year for which the most recent data are available, there were 27,851 dropouts. The data are reported by grade for each district. This information shows that there is considerable variation in rates among districts and by grade level within districts. The number of dropouts and dropout rates by grade category for all Ohio public schools for the six years beginning with the 1975-76 school year are listed on Table 1. There have been fluctuations from year to year with rates peaking for most grades in 1978-79. The actual number of dropouts in Ohio has started to decrease as enrollment has declined, but the dropout rate for secondary students has yet to decline. One disturbing fact is that the number of dropouts in grades seven and eight has not decreased and has continued to inch up slowly over the years, despite a decrease in enrollment.

Dropouts are also a concern to the Ohio Department of Education and the State Board of Education. The Board adopted as part of its Mission Statement for the 1980's the goal of reducing absenteeism and school dropouts in Ohio.

The Research

The Citizens' Council tries to call attention to serious problems and exists as a resource for finding solutions. The Council's review of quantitative data on dropouts helped to clarify that this is a problem and that it is severe in about 60 districts. The review of the quantitative data, however, left unanswered many questions about who drops out or why.

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[1] The most recent Council analysis was prepared for the 1979-80 school year. The first report was in the 1976 publication, Children Out of School in Ohio.

TABLE 1

The Number of Dropouts and Dropout Rates by Grade Level

for Ohio Schools

1975-76 School Year Through the 1980-81 School Year

A. Number of Dropouts By Grade Level

Year	Grade						
	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total Grades 7-12
1975-76	291	665	4,292	9,122	9,578	7,241	32,538
1976-77	257	651	4,223	9,416	9,631	7,753	33,725
1977-78	349	715	4,387	9,190	9,729	8,530	34,796
1978-79	623	1,086	5,040	10,537	9,820	8,602	37,402
1979-80	462	778	4,328	8,750	8,350	7,524	31,445
1980-81	458	790	4,282	7,993	7,450	6,878	27,851

B. Dropout Rates: Number of Students Who Drop Out as a Percent of Students Enrolled-By Grade Level

Year	Grade						
	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total Grades 7-12
1975-76	.2	.4	2.2	4.7	5.3	4.4	2.9
1976-77	.1	.4	2.2	4.9	5.4	4.8	3.1
1977-78	.2	.4	2.4	5.0	5.5	5.3	3.3
1978-79	.4	.7	2.8	5.9	5.9	5.4	3.7
1979-80	.3	.5	2.6	5.1	5.2	5.0	3.2
1980-81	.3	.5	2.7	5.0	4.7	4.7	3.1

Answers to these questions could give direction to finding solutions. The Council, therefore, decided to follow-up on the State's data on the number of dropouts and undertook this research project. The research explores what can be learned about solutions to the dropout problem by learning more about the students that school districts count as dropouts. It focuses on seventh and eighth grade dropouts. It draws on descriptive information that individual school districts have about their dropouts, and on the categories that districts use for recording in their child accounting efforts why students who are eligible for public education are not in school.

This research design depends on school district data about the students they counted as dropouts from grades seven and eight in the 1980-81 school year. While the focus is on the individuals who left school, it is not intended to suggest that only personal problems cause students to leave. Research is clear[2] that many school factors have a significant impact on whether the at risk group of students for leaving school actually drop out. While this study examines reasons that are assigned to individuals, it is not a full explanation of the individual's decisions. Furthermore, it is not a complete view of the dynamics and factors that explain the dropout phenomenon. The information on reasons is helpful for learning about how school districts account for students and for identifying some of the characteristics of the students who are at risk for leaving. This can suggest some of the factors that school practices and policies must address if they are to design interventions which will reduce the number of students who drop out. A more complete set of remedies to the dropout problem would depend on an analysis of school conditions as well. This

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[2] A good example is the 1980 research report conducted at the University of Wisconsin by Gary Wehlage, Calvin Stone, and Herbert M. Kliebard, entitled, Dropouts and Schools: Case Studies of the Dilemmas Educators Face.

research, therefore, should be seen as an exploration of what can be learned about dropouts and remedies by learning more about those students school districts count as dropouts.

This research was limited to seventh and eighth grade dropouts. These grades were selected because of the disturbing increase in the number of dropouts from these grades despite decreasing enrollment, and stability in other grade levels. A second reason for focusing on these two grades is that while the number of dropouts from these grades is small compared to the later grades, it is particularly troublesome because it is so early in the student's school career. Any dropouts at this grade are alarming. The Council felt that this small but alarming dropout issue should receive priority attention. Finally, information about the students who leave early would provide some insight about the basic issues that need attention, if interventions are to be designed to prevent students from leaving at any point in their school careers.

Research Design

In order to obtain more detailed information about seventh and eighth grade dropouts, the Council contacted school personnel in districts that reported to the Ohio Department of Education dropouts from these grades. We assumed that school personnel responsible for enforcing compulsory school attendance laws or those who work directly with students would have the necessary knowledge of these students to provide the information sought.

During the three school years between 1978-79 and 1980-81, there were between 32 and 42 school districts in Ohio that reported seventh grade dropouts. During the same period in a given year there were between 74 and 118 districts that reported eighth grade dropouts. Time did not permit

contacting all the districts with seventh or eighth grade dropouts. A sample of districts was required.

In order to draw a sample of districts to survey, we identified the school districts that had reported students leaving from either of these two grade levels every year between 1978-79 and 1980-81. This narrowed the sample to districts where a dropout at this point was not a fluke experience, and where personnel would likely have thoughts about the problem.

There are 168 different districts that reported any seventh or eighth grade dropouts during the three school years starting in 1978-79. Of these, 39 reported at least one dropout from grade seven or eight during each of the three school years starting with 1978-79. Those 39 districts constitute our sample, and are listed in order of enrollment size on Table 2. This table also reports by district the number of seventh and/or eighth grade dropouts for each year between 1978-79 and 1980-81.

The sample districts vary in size. They include 10 districts with between 1,000 and 3,000 students; 10 with 3,001 to 4,000 students; eight with 5,001 to 8,000 students; five with 10,000 to 17,000 students; and the six largest districts.

This sample provided a diverse set of districts, and was a number that we could realistically expect to contact during the time available. Furthermore, the dropouts in these 39 districts accounted for 94.5 percent of the students that dropped out of seventh grade in 1980-81 in Ohio (436 of 458), and 87.3 percent of the eighth grade students who dropped out that year (670 of 790). This represented a rather exhaustive sample of Ohio's young dropouts.

TABLE 2

Districts With at Least One Seventh or Eighth Grade Dropout
for Three Consecutive Years In Order of
District Size

District Name	ADM[1] 1980-81	Number of Dropouts Each Year 1980-81 7th	1980-81 8th	1979-80 7th	1979-80 8th	1978-79 7th	1978-79 8th
South Central Local	1,072	0	1	0	1	0	1
Williamsburg Local	1,126	0	1	0	1	0	1
Barberton City	1,212	0	3	1	3	2	4
Hicksville Exempted Village	1,281	0	1	1	1	0	1
Keystone Local	1,901	0	1	1	0	0	1
Bucyrus City	2,218	0	1	1	3	0	4
St. Mary's City	2,581	0	1	0	1	0	2
Claymont City	2,633	0	3	0	1	0	3
Shelby City	2,801	0	1	3	1	1	2
Fostoria City	2,886	0	3	0	1	5	9
Conneaut Area City	3,107	2	3	0	4	1	3
Warren City	3,115	0	1	1	3	2	1
Wapakoneta City	3,473	0	1	1	0	0	1
Ravenna City	3,707	0	2	2	0	0	1
Franklin City	3,897	0	7	0	8	0	1
Cloverleaf Local	3,902	5	7	5	10	0	1
Springfield Local	4,164	0	2	0	3	0	2
Norwood City	4,175	0	3	0	5	0	3
Piqua City	4,263	1	6	2	3	0	2
Vandalia-Butler City	4,378	1	1	0	1	0	2
Bedford City	5,041	0	1	0	2	1	4
Milford Exempted Village	5,293	0	1	2	1	0	1
Ashtabula Area City	5,837	0	1	0	2	0	2
Ohio Valley Local	5,882	2	5	1	4	2	3
Xenia City	6,398	1	3	2	12	9	17
Lancaster City	7,654	2	0	0	1	0	2
Lima City	7,736	0	1	0	1	0	2
Mansfield City	7,786	0	1	0	1	0	2
Hamilton City	10,689	17	49	22	44	36	49
Northwest Local	11,933	0	1	1	9	1	0
Springfield City	12,525	1	6	1	9	5	10
Canton City	14,801	3	12	5	5	4	14
South-Western City	16,392	10	28	8	18	1	4
Dayton City	32,380	27	34	21	28	37	41
Akron City	38,094	6	36	7	26	5	39
Toledo City	45,180	13	13	19	31	6	11
Cincinnati City	51,810	113	124	96	129	176	282
Columbus City	73,532	164	210	177	177	182	263
Cleveland City	83,488	66	115	46	84	99	124

[1]ADM - represents Average Daily Membership which is the average enrollment for the year.

We spoke with superintendents, assistant superintendents, pupil personnel directors, research staff, building principals and guidance counselors. We had phone conversations with personnel in 35 of the 39 districts in the sample. We were unable to make phone contact during the alloted time with personnel in Hicksville Exempted Village, St. Mary's City, Claymont City, and Warren City. All four of these districts only had dropouts from grade eight.

The research design also called for school visits in a small number of districts for more in-depth conversations with principals and counselors to learn more about the students who leave, and to learn more about the schools from which they depart. Time did not permit completion of this part of the resarch. Serious investigation of this area would surely be helpful to the search for remedies.

The phone interviews focused on collecting data on each child that was reported as a dropout in 1980-81, and other earlier years if available. We wanted information about the reason given for leaving, the age, race and sex of each student that dropped out, and any further information about the student's record. The identity of these students was not sought or disclosed. We also wanted to know about the procedures the schools follow when students drop out, categories used by districts for categorizing dropouts, the number of students who return, school programs designed to reduce the problem, and insights about remedies that those interviewed wanted to offer.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An inquiry about the individuals whom school districts count as dropouts revealed helpful information and some problems in two areas:

I. School practices regarding data collection on dropouts; and

II. Students who are counted as dropouts and the problems that must be addressed if the incidence of students dropping out is to be reduced.

Findings

I. Findings related to school district data collection practices.

1. Most districts maintain records which classify the reasons that students drop out of school and keep figures on the number of students who leave for each reason. Only Dayton did not keep such records. The reasons correspond, for the most part, to the legally allowed reasons for youth to discontinue their education. School districts in this survey reported dropouts for 14 different reasons.

2. Despite the fact that the Ohio Department of Education collects dropout data from all districts, the definition of who to count as a dropout is not specific enough to assure comparable data from all districts. This research revealed three categories of out of school youth that some districts count as dropouts and others did not. Those categories are students a) who are expelled by the school district; b) who are institutionalized; or c) whose whereabouts are unknown. All three of these categories affect a substantial share of the students counted as dropouts.

3. Because of the lack of uniformity in what categories of youth districts count as dropouts, the statistics that are gathered either undercount or overcount the number of dropouts in Ohio. Clear directions would provide a much more precise picture of this problem than now exists.

4. While most districts maintain records on the reasons that their students drop out, only the small districts could easily provide any detailed information about these students. In most cases, records are limited on the age, race, sex, or educational variables about these students. Only a few districts keep very detailed records. Two examples are Northwest Local (Hamilton County) and Cleveland City. Northwest uses an excellent data form to record information about each dropout

which includes information about educational variables. This form appears as Appendix I. Cleveland has an excellent centralized computerized data collection system that allows for detailed information on the reasons, race and sex of dropouts by schools in that system. Some of the analysis that is possible because of this type of detail is presented in Appendix II.

5. The largest single category of dropouts in this study were those students whom the districts could not locate. In some districts this child accounting problem is resolved by counting the student as a dropout. This is done without knowing if the student is in fact a dropout. Lost students account for 70 percent of the seventh grade dropouts and 48 percent of the eighth grade dropouts. These districts need to improve on their child accounting practices.

6. Some school district personnel in this study exhibited serious concern for dropouts and felt that it was their responsibility to assure maximum participation, while others did not share this concern and preferred to focus their energy only on those who "want to be in school." Those personnel who expressed concern for dropouts usually made efforts to work with these students. Some of the constructive practices described by personnel in this study included: a) exit interviews with each student who expresses an interest in leaving school. This practice prevents some youth from leaving, and allows the district to make sure the student wants to leave, to explore other options and to establish the district's concern; b) follow-up is given to all students who leave school on a work permit in two districts to make sure they have the job that allowed them to leave school. One district (Springfield City) tries to contact all students who have withdrawn. They are anxious to get those students back in school who no longer qualify to be out of school or who no longer want to be out. Few districts give this much attention to their responsibility to enforce compulsory attendance requirements; and c) several districts have special programs to address the needs of pregnant youth so they can be encouraged to remain in school. Some are aware that the general school atmosphere and the kinds of rewards available to youth must be diverse so that students with diverse needs and from different situations are able to learn.

II. Findings related to the reasons students leave and the problems that must be addressed to reduce the incidence of students dropping out.

1. Truancy and in a few cases, serious misbehavior, lead to expulsion for up to a semester in Ohio schools. Some districts count the students they put out of school as dropouts. This category accounts for the second largest share of dropouts.

2. Some of the characteristics of students who are at risk for dropping out can be seen in four categories of reasons for dropping out. There are more students who have these characteristics than actually drop out, and these characteristics alone do not explain their leaving school. While these categories combined account for a small number of the students who are counted as dropouts, they suggest real needs that must be addressed and provide some guidance for designing interventions that can prevent the potential seventh and eighth grade dropout or older student from leaving school. The five categories and three "at risk" characteristics revealed in this research are:

   A. Pregnancy. The third largest category of dropouts (behind lost and expelled) are students who are pregnant or are already parents. There were 73 seventh and eighth graders who left school for this reason, or about 7.2 percent of the reported dropouts from these two grades.

   B. Overage for grade due to repeated retention. The fourth largest group of dropouts are those who are old enough to leave school legally. This includes those who are at least 16 years old and have a work permit, or those who are 18 years old. This sample included 59 students who had work permits and four who were 18 years old. According to the obersvations of those interviewed in this research, most of these students have had repeated academic failure, are not in special programs, and have normal but low intelligence.

   C. Students who have runaway or have been placed in institutions. These two dropout categories represent youth in serious personal crisis. Each group accounts for about 5 percent of the seventh and eighth grade dropouts.

Recommendations

1. Quantiative data is essential to understanding the scope of the dropout problem and where it is located. Because of the need for accurate data and the obvious inaccuracies identified in this research we recommend:

   A. That the Ohio Department of Education, the agency that collects the only aggregate and comparative data by district on dropouts in Ohio, should continue to collect these data from districts, report the information in a way that is helpful to district personnel and the public, and publish it.

B. That the Department provide specific instructions to local districts about which categories of out-of-school youth should be counted as dropouts. The present instructions now state, "any youth who is out of school for reasons other than death, illness, or moving to another district." Given the inconsistencies among districts revealed in this research about counting expelled, institutionalized or lost youth, it is clear that the present instructions are not adequate. Much more specificity is needed. One approach would be to convene pupil personnel directors from a sample of districts to identify any other areas of doubt that should be addressed in clear instructions, and to hammer out exactly which categories should be included.

C. Regardless of the outcome of a process for improving rules for counting dropouts, the Department should collect from districts the number of students who are expelled and lost as separate categories in the end of the year report. These are both significant categories about which data should be available.

2. Information about why youth drop out of school is essential to designing remedies. Despite the value of information about a problem population and the relative ease in keeping this information, comprehensive data are lacking. Individual districts should improve record-keeping and use. The State Department of Education should encourage improved record-keeping by local districts by paying closer attention to the data it now collects and by collecting more detailed information by reason, grade and sex for dropouts in Ohio. Careful consideration should be given to adding to current reports data on the age and race of dropouts. More detail can improve our understanding of the youth whom schools have the hardest time serving.

3. This research revealed several characteristics of students who are vulnerable and at risk for leaving school in the early grades. While schools cannot solve personal problems, they can be a resource that is supportive to youth in crisis. They can identify youth who are crisis prone and call on those with the proper resources to intervene. Schools can also help prevent crisis by being a positive experience for these students. Thought must be

given to the school environment, rewards, and curriculum and if they are supportive of students with diverse values, goals and needs.

Therefore, school personnel need to be encouraged to cooperate with others who work with these youth and to play a supportive role. The Ohio Department of Education should convene Ohio educators, juvenile court and social service agency personnel to devise strategies for a shared approach to youth at risk. This should be done in every community. At the same time, positive efforts should be shared. These are not easy problems to solve.

4. One group at risk are those with low-normal intelligence who experience repeated academic failure. This group is directly affected by educational practices. Local and state resources should be committed to finding educational practices that help these students succeed.

5. The research revealed widespread use of expulsion in school districts, often for attendance problems. Whether or not expelled students are counted as dropouts, expulsion has a detrimental effect in the long-run on a student's desire or ability to survive in school. Expulsion for truancy is counter-productive because it excludes students from school as an attempt to teach them that attendance is important. Schools should limit the use of this punishment and remove only violent students that threaten the safety of the school environment.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction should determine whether expelling students who have attendance problems is in any way a violation by a district of its responsibility to enforce compulsory education laws.

6. Many school districts in this sample follow exceptionally good procedures when working with the potential dropout. Many have exemplary data

collection systems. Others show a serious commitment to serving all children which is communicated throughout the district. The Ohio Department of Education should provide local school districts with information about the very constructive activities that local school districts can adopt if they want to help more school children stay in school, and if they want to have a good handle on the problem of early school leaving.

7. Finally, the Ohio Department and local school leaders need to remind districts of their responsibility to serve all children. Many districts need to be reminded that practices that discourage participation are undesirable and that some school resources must be expended to serve the at risk population. It is not acceptable for school districts to have seventh or eighth graders who drop out.

A REVIEW OF THE DATA COLLECTED ON 7TH AND 8TH GRADE DROPOUTS

I. Reasons for Leaving

The first research goal was to learn as much as possible about who leaves school in grades seven and eight, and the reasons they leave. We assumed that this would provide some of the information needed to understand the dropout problem and hopefully could help clarify areas for action. Since the Ohio Department of Education's data on dropouts does not include this information, we contacted school districts in our sample. We were particularly interested in the reasons that seventh and eighth graders who dropped out during the 1980-81 school year left school.

Of the 39 districts in the sample, one only reported seventh grade dropouts, 16 had seventh and eighth grade dropouts, and 22 only had eighth grade dropouts. There were a total of 17 districts with seventh grade dropouts and 38 districts with eighth grade dropouts.

Of the 38 districts in the sample reporting eighth grade dropouts, we contacted 34, and were able to obtain information on reasons for leaving from 32. We contacted all 17 of the districts with seventh grade dropouts in 1980-81; however, only 15 could provide information by reason. In most cases, the districts either had good centralized records on the reasons that students left, could find the individual files and thereby construct the needed information, or the person interviewed had personal knowledge of the students. One rather significant exception is Dayton which does not keep data by reason for its dropouts. The second district that could not provide data by reason is Akron. Akron keeps data by reason, but groups seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students together making it impossible to obtain the level of detail by grade level that was sought.

In a few cases, there were discrepancies between the number of dropouts reported in the report to the State, and the number of dropouts the districts would agree they had (Vandalia-Butler and Xenia said they had fewer; and Northwest Local said they had more). Finally, in two cases, the districts could only provide information by reason for some of their dropouts. However, they did not deny the numbers reported to the State (Canton and Hamilton).

Despite these limitations, data on reasons for leaving were obtained for the most of the students in our sample and a large proportion of the early dropouts from Ohio schools. We obtained information on the reasons that 399 of the seventh grade dropouts in the sample districts left. They account for 92 percent of the 436 seventh grade dropouts in the sample and 87 percent of all 458 seventh grade dropouts in the state in 1980-81. The 34 districts contacted about eighth grade dropouts gave information on the reasons that 597 of the 670 eighth grade dropouts in our sample left school, or 89 percent of the dropouts in the state. These 597 students are 76 percent of the 790 eighth grade dropouts in Ohio during the 1980-81 school year.

A. The Reasons Seventh Graders in the Sample Left School During the 1980-81 School Year

The 17 districts in our sample that had students drop out of grade seven during the 1980-81 school year are listed on Table 3 in order of their enrollment size. This table also lists for each district the number of students reported as seventh grade dropouts in the End of the Year Report, and the reasons (where available) those students left as reported to us by the local school district.

As can be seen on Table 3, districts of all sizes had students drop out of grade seven. There were many reasons given for students leaving. The number of reasons given in any district seems to increase as enrollment size increases.

Table 4 combines the data on seventh grade dropouts by reason for the 15 districts for which data were available. This table includes information about the number of districts reporting dropouts in each category, the actual number of dropouts in each category, and the proportion that each category represents of the total number of seventh grade dropouts about whom information was obtained.

As can be seen on Table 4, the districts used a total of 12 different categories of reasons to explain why students left school in seventh grade. Some reasons were used more frequently among the districts than others. There is considerable variation in the number of students leaving for each reason. The number of students affected does not necessarily relate to the number of districts using the category.

While the districts used 12 different categories for classifying seventh grade dropouts, three categories account for most of the students who left school in 1980-81. Those categories are: lost to the system (address unknown or whereabouts unknown are also included in this category), miscellaneous, and expulsion.

TABLE 3

Number of Seventh Grade Dropouts By Reason and District
for a Sample of Ohio Districts --
1980-81 School Year

District (Order by Size of ADM)	No. Dropouts Listed ---- State Report	Number of Seventh Grade Dropouts By Reason — Reason - See Key for Meaning											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Districts with 1 to 5,000 Students													
Conneaut	2					2							
Cloverleaf	5					5							
Piqua	1					1							
Vandalia-Butler	1												
Districts with 5,001 to 10,000 Students													
Ohio Valley Local	2						2						
Xenia	1												
Lancaster	4					4							
Districts with 10,001 to 17,000 Students													
Hamilton	17					12	4						
Northwest	1		1										
Springfield City	1			1									
Canton	3								1				
South-Western	10				1	3	3		3				
Districts with 30,000 + Students													
Dayton	27	----------DATA NOT AVAILABLE BY REASON----------											
Akron	6	----------DATA NOT AVAILABLE BY REASON----------											
Toledo	13						13						
Cincinnati	113	1	1	5		28		75		2	1		
Columbus	164		1	1	1		125	36					
Cleveland	66		2	8		6	22		7			19	2
TOTAL	436	1	5	15	2	61	169	111	11	2	1	19	2

Total Accounted for: 399

Key: (Reason #)

1 = Overage and Quit (18)
2 = 16 and Work Permit
3 = Pregnant
4 = Marriage
5 = Expulsion
6 = Lost
7 = Miscellaneous
8 = Runaway
9 = Military
10 = Home Permit
11 = Institutionalized
12 = Temporary Excuse

TABLE 4

Reason Seventh Graders Dropped Out of School
in 17 School Districts in Ohio
1980-81 School Year

Reason	No. of Districts Reporting Any Dropouts In This Category	Number of Dropouts	Percent 7th Grade Dropouts in Sample
Lost to System/ Whereabouts Unknown/ Address Unknown	6	169	42.2%
Miscellaneous	2	111	27.7%
Expulsion	8	61	15.3%
Institutionalized	1	19	4.8%
Pregnancy	4	15	3.8%
Runaway	3	11	2.8%
16+ Years Old and Work Permit	4	5	1.3%
Marriage	2	2	.5%
Military	1	2	.5%
Temporary Excuse	1	2	.5%
Overage and Quit	1	1	.3%
Home Permit	1	1	.3%
Total		399	100.0%

1. Lost to the System

According to the data on Table 4, when reasons by district are combined the largest number of students were counted as dropouts because they were "lost to the system." There were 169 students from six school districts classified as lost, whereabouts unknown, or address unknown. These six districts reported these students as dropouts. They account for 42.2 percent of the students classified as dropouts about whom we obtained information on their reasons for leaving school. In most districts, these students were identified because they were expected to enroll in the fall and did not show, or they stopped coming in mid-year. This caused the district to look for the students. Upon investigation, the districts could locate neither the individual nor that person's family. No records were requested from another district indicating re-enrollment elsewhere. There was no information about whether or not these students were in school.

Few of the small districts in our sample used this category. When asked about the issue of lost students, most explained that they rarely have trouble locating their students. The problem was much more common in large districts. In fact, this category accounts for 125 of the seventh grade dropouts in Columbus or 76 percent of the dropouts in that district alone and 74 percent of all the dropouts in this category. Cleveland is the other large district reporting "lost" students. They reported 22 students in this category that account for one-third of the dropouts in that district. Columbus personnel admitted some record-keeping difficulties that explained the large number of lost students. Size may indeed be a factor because larger districts have more students to account for and lack much of the personal knowledge that exists in small communities.

Many districts reported that if they do have a "lost" student, they do not report those students as dropouts. Many assume that the students are in school elsewhere. The fact that the large districts count their lost students as dropouts while some small districts do not explains some of the difference in dropout rates for these districts.

Lost does not correspond to any of the categories of dropouts that are explained by law. Futhermore, lost is not really a reason for leaving. It is just acknowledgement that the district cannot find the student. It is unclear what proportion of these students are in fact dropouts and what the real reason is for their leaving. It appears that this is a child accounting problem that some districts solve by counting lost students dropouts.

2. Miscellaneous

The second largest number of students who were counted as dropouts from grade seven in 1980-81 are a second group of lost students that their districts label "miscellaneous." There are 111 students or 27.7 percent of the dropouts from this grade who fall in this category. These students are from two large districts with large numbers of dropouts: Cincinnati and Columbus. Cincinnati does not use the "lost" category discussed above. They assign their lost students to this category. Columbus uses both categories. "Miscellaneous" in Columbus refers to students who were supposed to have transferred within the district but cannot be located. This is another bookkeeping problem.

When the two categories of lost students are combined, they account for almost 70 percent of the seventh grade dropouts about whom we were able to obtain information. Because the students cannot be found, it is impossible to identify the underlying problems. In some cases these lost students are part of mobile families who actually move frequently and may not enroll their

children in school. In other cases, it may simply be sloppy record-keeping by the district. In either instance, the districts do not know whether or not the student is enrolled in school. They accommodate this uncertainty by counting the student as a dropout.

3. Expulsion

The third largest number of dropouts are those 61 students from eight districts who were expelled during the school year. They account for 15.8 percent of the dropouts in the sample. Some districts only count those expelled during the second semester as dropouts; others report all expulsions; others feel that only those who do not return to school should be counted.

Many districts in this survey expell students but do not report them as dropouts. Of the three big cities reporting dropouts by reason, Cleveland and Cincinnati report expelled students as dropouts, while Columbus does not. Of the 15 districts that gave us reasons, 10 report expelled students as dropouts and five do not. Many districts expell students but do not report them as dropouts. This indicates that if expelled students should be counted, the actual number of dropouts reported in these 15 districts and statewide is low. If expelled students are not properly dropouts, then the reverse is true.

4. Other Reasons

The remaining 58 dropouts are distributed among the nine other categories. There are three categories with more than 10 dropouts in each category. These three combined account for 45 of the dropouts. The categories and the number of students in each are: instutitionalized--19; pregnant--15; and runaway--11. They account for 4.8 percent, 3.8 percent, and 2.8 percent respectively of the dropouts. Almost 12 percent of the seventh grade dropouts in the sample are students who left for these reasons.

While these three categories account for a relatively small share of the dropouts, these are problems that are common among districts. Four districts reported pregnant students as dropouts, and three had runaways. Only one district, Cleveland, reported institutionalized youth as dropouts. Others who had institutionalized youth did not consider them dropouts because they were usually enrolled in an educational program. They were not concerned whether or not that program was for credit.

The remaining 13 dropouts left for the following reasons: five students were at least 16 years old and had a work permit; two were married; two joined the military; two had "temporary excuses"; one student was over 18 and quit; and one had a "home permit." Only Cincinnati used the reason of home permit, and Cleveland used temporary excuses. In each case it refers to a school district accomodation on a temporary basis of a school-aged youth who for some unusual reason is unable to attend school. Those reasons usually fall within the technical reasons permitted by law.

B. Reasons that Eighth Grade Students Dropped Out of School--1980-81 School Year

There are more eighth grade dropouts from more districts than was the case for seventh graders, however, many of the reasons and definitions of problems that apply to seventh grade dropouts also apply to eighth grade dropouts.

Thirty-eight of the 39 districts in our sample had eighth graders who dropped out of school during the 1980-81 school year. There were 697 dropouts reported in those districts, according to the Ohio Department of Education's data. We contacted 34 of the 38 districts, and obtained information on the reasons students left from 32 of the districts in the sample.

Those districts in order of their enrollment size are listed on Table 5. The table also reports the number of dropouts reported to the state, and the number of students who left for each reason. We were able to account for 614 of the 697 students in our sample, and had information on why 597 of the students left school.

As can be seen on Table 5, the range of sizes of districts having eighth graders drop out is the same as with seventh graders, but there are many more of the large districts and middle sized districts with both seventh and eighth grade dropouts.

The reasons that students left grade eight, the number of the districts reporting dropouts for those reasons, the actual number of students who left for each reason, and the proportion of dropouts in the sample that left for each reason appear on Table 6.

The 32 districts reported a total of 14 reasons that eighth graders dropped out of school in 1980-81. They include the 12 reasons reported for seventh graders plus "parent request" and "family-responsibility." As was the case with seventh grade dropouts, some reasons were reported more frequently among districts, and the actual number of dropouts by reason was not uniform.

The three reasons students dropped out of school that account for the largest number of dropouts are the same for seventh grade: lost to the system, expulsion and miscellaneous. Each category, however, accounted for a smaller share of the eighth grade dropouts than was the case for seventh grade. The order of significance also changes. Several other categories accounted for larger proportions and numbers of dropouts than was the case for seventh grade dropouts.

TABLE 5

The Number of Eighth Graders Who Dropped Out of a Sample of Ohio Districts
By Reason By District -- 1980-81 School Year

District Name	Total # Dropouts in State Report	Total # Dropouts Accounted For	Number of Dropouts By Reason (see Key for reason)													
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Districts with 1 - 5,000 Students																
South Central	1	1	1													
Williamsburg	1	1	1													
Barberton	3	3					2									1
Keystone	1	1		1												
Bucyrus	1	1		1												
Shelby	1	1												1		
Fostoria	3	3					3									
Conneaut	4	4		1	1		2									
Wapakoneta	1	1			1											
Ravenna	2	2		2												
Franklin	7	0														
Cloverleaf	7	7					7									
Springfield Local	2	2		1									1			
Norwood	3	3		2					1							
Piqua	6	6		1			5									
Vandalia-Butler	1	1		1												
Districts with 5,001 - 10,000 Students																
Bedford	1	1					1									
Milford Exempted Village	1	1		1												
Ashtabula	1	1														1
Ohio Valley	5	5			1			1						1		2
Xenia	3	2		1					1							
Lima	1	1		1												
Mansfield	1	1					1									

TABLE 5 (CONTINUED)

District Name	Total # Dropouts in State Report	Total # Dropouts Accounted For	Number By Reason													
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Districts With 10,001 - 17,000 Students																
Hamilton	49	49		4	3	1	39	1	1							
Northwest Local	1	7		6												1
Springfield City	6	6		4	2											
Canton	12	9		3	2											4
South-Western	28	28		1			16	3					4			4
Districts With 30,000 + Students																
Dayton	34	----------NOT AVAILABLE BY REASON----------														
Akron	36	----------NOT AVAILABLE BY REASON----------														
Toledo	13	13						13								
Cincinnati	124	124		7	5		46			64	1	1				
Columbus	210	210		14	8	1		140	1	46						
Cleveland	115	115	1	2	33		8	22	1				23		4	21
TOTAL	691	610	3	54	56	2	130	180	5	110	1	1	28	2	4	34
Each Category as % of Those Accounted for:		100	.5	8.8	9.2	.3	21.3	29.5	.8	18.0	.2	.2	4.6	.3	.7	5.6

Key: (Reason #)

1 = Overage and Quit (18)
2 = 16 years and work permit
3 = Pregnant
4 = Family Responsibility
5 = Expulsion
6 = Lost
7 = Marriage
8 = Miscellaneous
9 = Military
10 = Home Permit
11 = Institutionalized
12 = Parent Request
13 = Temporary Excuse
14 = Runaway

TABLE 6

Reasons That Eighth Graders Left School
1980-81 School Year

Reason	Number of Districts in Sample Reporting Dropouts in this Category	Number of Dropouts	Percent of All Dropouts in Sample Where Reason Available
Lost to System/ Address Unknown/ Whereabouts Unknown	6	180	29.5%
Expulsion	11	130	21.3%
Miscellaneous	2	110	18.0%
Pregnancy	9	56	9.2%
16 Years Old/ Work Permit	19	54	8.8%
Runaway	7	34	5.6%
Institutionalized	3	28	4.6%
Marriage	5	5	.8%
Temporary Excuse	1	4	.7%
Overage and Quit	3	3	.5%
Family Responsibility/ Parenthood	2	2	.3%
Parent Request	2	2	.3%
Military	1	1	.2%
Home Permit	1	1	.2%
Total		610	100.0%

1. Lost to the system

Six school districts used this category and 180 eighth grade students were reported as dropouts because they could not be found by their districts. They accounted for 23 percent of the eighth grade dropouts in the sample. As was the case for seventh graders, the largest number reported as lost came from Columbus. There were 140 "lost" students from Columbus out of a total of 180 from the six districts reporting dropouts in this category. Other districts reporting "lost" students include: Ohio Valley, Hamilton, South-Western, Toledo, Columbus and Cleveland.

2. Expulsion

The second largest number of eighth graders were reported as dropouts because they had been expelled at some point during the 1980-81 school year. Eleven of the districts reported 130 dropouts in this category. Those students account for 21.8 percent of the eighth grade dropouts. When districts were asked if they report expelled students as dropouts, 17 districts in the sample said they do not count expelled students as dropouts.

3. Miscellaneous

Only two districts reported dropouts in this category but it involved 110 students or 18.4 percent of the dropouts. The same two districts, Cincinnati and Columbus reported dropouts in this category as was the case for seventh grade dropouts.

The "Lost to the System" and "Miscellaneous" categories both apply to students the districts cannot find. While these two categories combined account for a large share of the dropouts in grade eight, the proportion is smaller than was the case for seventh graders. Combined, 46.4 percent of the eighth grade dropouts are lost students, compared to about 70 percent of the seventh grade dropouts.

4. Other Categories

There are four categories that are commonly used by districts and account for a significant share of the eighth grade dropouts. They account for a larger number and share of the eighth grade dropouts than they did of the seventh. In both grades they are the most important non-bookkeeping explanations.

Youth who are pregnant, age 16 or older and have a work permit, those who run away, and those who are institutionalized constitute the four categories that account for a substantial share of the eighth grade dropouts. Combined they account for about 30 percent of the dropouts at this grade level. They account for about 13 percent of the seventh grade dropouts.

Pregnancy accounts for the fourth largest number and proportion of the eighth grade dropouts. Nine districts reported a total of 56 students who dropped out because of pregnancy. They accounted for 9.4 percent of all the eighth grade dropouts for whom information was available. Personnel in almost every district said that there are pregnant junior high students in their districts. Those students do not always withdraw from school. Many of the districts reported special programs for their pregnant students that kept this number down, and others explained that it is much more acceptable than it was several years ago for a student to remain in their regular school if pregnant. These districts did not stop pregnant students from dropping out if the student elected to do so.

The reason that the largest number of districts reported for eighth graders leaving school as the "age and school certificate." If students are at least 16 years old they may leave school with parental permission if they have a work permit. There were 19 districts that reported a total of 54 students leaving for this reason. These students accounted for 9.0 percent of the dropouts from eighth grade.

The personnel interviewed revealed that it is not uncommon to have students who are at least 16 in grade eight. These students have been retained in grade several times. In many cases they are discouraged learners and often have IQ's in the lower range but do not qualify for any special educational programs. They often become troublemakers, or truant from school. This reinforces their negative school experience and their school failure. They remain in school until they have a legal reason for leaving such as reaching 16 and obtaining a work permit. Some persist until they are 18 and can legally quit.

A total of seven districts reported that 34 of their students were dropouts because they had run away. The families could be located, but the students had left home. This serious problem accounted for 5.7 percent of the eighth grade dropouts counted in 1980-81.

The final category accounting for a significant proportion of dropouts is the "institutionalized" category. At this grade level three districts reported institutionalized youth as dropouts. There were 28 students who were placed in institutions and therefore withdrawn from the local school district. They accounted for 4.7 percent of the eighth grade dropouts during 1980-81.

The remaining 3 percent of the dropouts from grade eight left school for seven different reasons. Each of the reasons accounted for less than 1 percent of the dropouts studied here. The reasons are marriage, temporary excuse, overage and quit, family responsibility (parenthood), parent request, military service and home permit.

C. Summary of Reasons that Seventh and Eighth Grade Students Left School

Table 7 lists the reasons and numbers of students from both seventh and eighth grade who are dropouts.

This research indicates that school districts categorize a wide range of absent students as dropouts. We learned that not all districts use the same categories, nor do all districts count as dropouts the same type of absent student. As seen on Table 7, the three reasons that account for the largest number of students leaving school in the early grades are reasons that are not universally counted as dropouts: lost, miscellaneous and expelled. That is, not all districts who expell students count them as dropouts. Similarly, not all districts that are unable to locate their students (lost and miscellaneous categories) count these students as dropouts. A fourth category that districts do not uniformly identify as a dropout is the institutionalized youth.

The four categories of dropouts that are not universally applied account for 360 of the seventh grade dropouts and 488 of the eighth grade dropouts. The remaining 39 seventh grade dropouts and 162 eighth grade dropouts leave for reasons that are more concrete and commonly agreed to as dropouts.

The fact that there is disagreement on the four categories that account for such a substantial share of the youth who were reported as dropouts in 1980-81 suggests the following problems with our present knowledge and understanding of the dropout problem in Ohio.

1. The aggregate data for the state and the specific data for individual districts is not accurate because there is not a clear definition of who should be counted as a dropout. We are either over-counting or under-counting dropouts in Ohio and in individual districts because there is not a uniform definition of who should be counted.

TABLE 7

Reasons Students in a Sample of 39 Ohio School Districts
Dropped Out of Seventh and Eighth Grade
1980-81 School Year

	7th Grade		8th Grade		7th/8th Grade	
Inconsistently Used Reasons	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total
Lost	169	42.4	180	29.5	349	34.6
Miscellaneous	111	27.8	110	18.0	221	21.9
Expulsion	61	15.3	130	21.3	191	18.9
Institutionalized	19	4.7	28	4.6	47	4.7
Sub Total	360	90.2	448	73.4	808	80.1
Consistently Used Reasons						
Pregnancy/Family Responsibility/ Parenthood	15	3.8	58	9.5	73	7.2
Runaway	11	2.8	34	5.6	45	4.5
16 and Work Permit	5	1.3	54	8.9	59	5.8
Marriage	2	.5	5	.8	7	.7
Military	2	.5	1	.2	3	.3
Temporary Excuse	2	.5	4	.7	6	.6
Overage and Quit	1	.2	3	.5	4	.4
Home Permit	1	.2	1	.2	2	.2
Parent Request	0	—	2	.3	2	.2
Sub Total	39	9.8	162	26.7	201	19.9
TOTAL	399	100.0	610	100.0	1,009	100.0

2. Dropout data for many districts cannot be compared because districts do not use uniform definitions of which out of school youth should be counted as dropouts.

A clarification of how to define a dropout and who to include is essential for accurate quantiative data about the problem. Futhermore, record-keeping by reasons is not now required. If this were added to the State requirements, it would help to further understanding of this problem and could contribute to problem-solving.

II. Data on Dropouts by Race, Age and Sex

This research also tried to collect information about the age, race and sex of the student leaving. We tried to gather this for each dropout by the reason they left. The availability of this data was varied. When individual case material was available, the whole story was obtained. Only one of the large districts, Cleveland, could provide data by reason, race and sex.

All of the districts with fewer than 5,000 students were able to provide information on the reason, race and sex of students who dropped out of grades seven and eight. Age data were rarely available. Only a small share of Ohio's dropouts were from these districts so it does not tell much, although it does give a complete picture for those small districts.

There were a total of five males and three females who dropped out of seventh grade, and 26 males and 11 females who dropped out of grade eight in the small districts in this study. All of these students were white. At least in these small districts, males appear to be more likely to drop out. These districts all tend to have all white or a minimal minority enrollment. When the data are viewed by reason, both male and female students were expelled

or obtained work permits although males were affected more frequently. Marriage and pregnancy only applied to females. The two overage students and the one institutionalized student were male, and the one runaway was a female.

In the districts with 5,000 to 10,000 students, the data on reason by race and sex were available for four of the six seventh graders who dropped out, and eight of the 12 eighth graders. Again, males are more likely to drop out. There were four female and eight male dropouts in these two grades. Two of the 12 dropouts were black eighth graders, the rest were white. Both male and female students were expelled, but males were more frequently expelled. Marriage and pregnancy only affected female students (white in both cases here). One black female ran away and three males were 16 and obtained work permits (one black, and two white).

Unfortunately, the larger the district, the harder it was to obtain the detailed information by reason, race and sex. The information was too limited for the districts over 10,000 students to report here.

We did discover that two of the largest districts, Cleveland and Cincinnati, have revised their own data collection systems for the 1981-82 school year to include this information. The Cleveland data for the 1981-82 school year were available at the time of this research. An analysis of that information is provided in Appendix II. It gives some insight into the problem in this single district which in 1980-81 was the school district from which 15 percent of the students who dropped out of grade seven and 15 percent who left grade eight were enrolled. At least in the case of this district, numbers and reasons by race and sex vary considerably from the small districts for which this information was available. It shows that it is hard to generalize about variation by sex and race for all districts and youth who dropped out in Ohio.

III. Educator Observations About Why Students Leave

In addition to the specific data on reasons, we also asked the educators in the survey to share their insights about these youth and any other problems that went beyond the reason given for leaving, that would help explain why the students left school. Data were not collected to verify these observations. However, the personal views of those interviewed suggests several consistent factors that would describe the population that is "at risk" for dropping out of school in the early grades. The three commonly identified problems are:

1. The family does not support education. It was very common for those interviewed to explain that many of the dropouts had reached the same point in school that their parents had achieved. There was minimal support from the home for the student to remain in school any longer. If there were any behavior, academic, or personal barriers to the students's continued participation, there was little help from the family in overcoming those barriers. Several of the educators we contacted tried hard to compensate for the lack of family support by providing personal assistance to the youth, but they viewed their effectiveness as limited.

2. Many of the children who drop out come from troubled families. Many of these students are coping with very distracting home conditions which interfere with a positive school experience. Many are also in trouble with the law or become pregnant. They often act out in school, are suspended, become truant, and fall behind. Their school performance does not necessarily correspond to their abilities. However, they do not do well and find a reason to leave.

3. Many students who have "low normal" intelligence have trouble completing school. Many of the students who are overage for their grade and quit because they are 18 or because they obtain a work permit at 16, fall in this category. They give many years to education, but fail to advance academically and remain in junior high way beyond their years. These are students for whom the regular school program has not worked. They persist for a long time, but never succeed.

IV. Underlying Problems and Proposed Remedies

This research project collected data on the reasons that students leave school in order to gain insight about possible remedies that could reduce the dropout problem in Ohio. The reasons identified in the data section and from the views of those educators interviewed suggest the following special problems that need attention:

1. School districts need to improve their record-keeping about students. Fewer lost students would reduce the number of dropouts. A clarification of whether or not lost students are dropouts would be another way to affect the quality and accuracy of dropout statistics.

2. Expulsion is widely used among school districts to punish absent students as well as students who commit serious offenses. This is a school initiated action that educators agreed can have a very negative effect on the student's ability and will to succeed in school. Few districts have course offerings that start mid-year so the student who is expelled the first semester cannot start the course without being a semester behind. When a student starts a course behind, it leads to more school failure. Expulsion, therefore, discourages participation in the short-term as well as the long-term. If districts would reserve this practice only for the most severe behavior problems,

it could have positive long-term consequences for student participation. Many of the districts that expell students already limit its use. Others, however, use it freely, especially to punish truant students. This practice is especially questionable. It helps improve the attendance figures for the district, but masks the problem since the students are still out of school. Futhermore, it can relieve the district from having to take any futher action with a frustrating student. Both of these things make it undesirable as a school practice, not to mention the negative effect on the student. While attendance problems are real, expulsion seems a contradictory approach to enforcing school attendance laws or solving problems that lead to non-attendance. The negative qualities of this practice suggest it could be abandoned or severely limited which would result in short and long run improvements in dropout statistics.

3. Pregnancy, parenthood and family responsibility accounted for a significant number of dropouts in both grades. Many Ohio youth in districts large and small have these responsibilities, and many quit school. While school districts can do little about their students' sexual behavior, there are school practices that can be more or less supportive of school participation. The current practice of allowing students to reamin in the regular program is an improvement over past practice. Despite this option, a significant number of students still drop out. This suggests that additional encouragement to stay, special educational resources at the end of pregnancy and early after delivery, and special educational programs are all promising practices that schools can use to help assure that the pregnant student or new parent has a chance to finish school. In small districts special programs are less feasible so individualized accommodations are the most likely remedy.

Many of the larger districts already report having special programs for their pregnant students and claim that they have helped many students remain in school through this period.

4. Many youth are in crisis and the runaway is one extreme expression of that problem. To the extent that the school experience is a positive experience for the troubled youth, schools can help have a preventive effect. After the fact, however, there is little that can be done but count this student as a dropout.

5. Many school districts retain students in grade several times in their career so that it is possible for a seventh or eighth grader to be 16 and in a few cases 18. Students who are 16 may legally quit school if they have a work permit and parental permission. Students who are 18 may quit. There were five seventh graders and 54 eighth graders who were reported as dropouts because they were 16 and obtained a work permit, and one seventh grader and three eighth graders who were 18. These numbers are significant. School personnel were particularly concerned about these students. They described them in many cases, as the students with low but normal intelligence who did not qualify for special programs, but had serious problems progressing academically. They are also the students who often were in trouble and disruptive. While not all students who left school because of a work permit or being 18 necessarily fit this description, many do. This is one area where academic and educational programs could have a direct effect on the problem. While the number of students leaving seventh and eighth grade for these reasons, attention would prevent larger numbers from leaving later and would help many who pass through school despite academic failure.

The educators we talked with expressed frustration about better serving the needs of these youth. Many raised the issue of how to make the regular

school program more useful for this group of students. This is a special dilemma which should receive more attention from educators. There do not appear to be any easy answers, but there is certainly an "at risk" group who could be helped to succeed in school if special attention were given to their academic needs.

6. Seven students were reported as leaving because of marriage. While the number is low, it is questionable why this should be a valid reason for allowing a student to leave school. Marriage should be explicity ruled out as a legitimate reason for dropping out.

Appendix I

NORTHWEST LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

DROP-OUT REPORT

Date of Report: _____ Date of Drop-Out: _____

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

Student's Name: _____ Birthdate: _____
(Last) (First) (Middle)

Address: _____ Zip Code: _____

Year Enrolled in District: _____

At time of drop-out: Age _____
Grade _____

COURSE OF STUDY

_____ Academic
_____ Vocational
_____ General
_____ Special Education

QUALITY OF SCHOLASTIC WORK

	CURRENT YEAR	PREVIOUS YEAR
Good	_____	_____
Satisfactory	_____	_____
Unsatisfactory	_____	_____

ATTENDANCE

	CURRENT YEAR	PREVIOUS YEAR
Number of days absent	_____	_____
Over 30 days absent	_____	_____
Truancy	_____	_____

DISCIPLINE RECORD

Repeated Suspensions _____ Some Suspensions _____

FAMILY STATUS - Living With:

Both Parents _____
Father _____
Mother _____
Guardian _____
Spouse _____

How many times was student retained: _____ If no record, check here _____

Test date: IQ _____ Year _____
Objective Achievement: Years above level _____
Years below level _____
At grade level _____

Reason for leaving school: _____

_____

_____
School Official

Appendix II

Detailed Cleveland Dropout Data

The Cleveland Public Schools are the largest district in Ohio. In 1981-82, secondary students were enrolled in 24 junior high schools and 14 senior high schools. The district has computerized its record-keeping and given special attention to gathering accurate data about its dropouts at the building and district level. The data are still only as good as the record-keeping at the building level, but considerable detail is available that makes problem identification and policy consideration feasible. Data collected for the 1981-82 school year are presented here to illustrate some of the issues that can be considered when detailed data are collected.

The district collects information on the number of dropouts by grade, race, sex, and reason for each school building. It's possible to identify the numbers for each of these variables and for all variables combined, for each building and the district. The summary data for the district as a whole are reported on Tables I, II and III. This type of information is especially helpful for learning how big the problem is, where it is located, who is most affected, and the type of programs that are needed.

1. *How many dropouts are there?*

As can be seen on Table I, schools reported 75 seventh grade dropouts and 113 eighth grade dropouts in 1981-82.

2. *Who are the dropouts?*

Table I also reports the number of dropouts in each grade by sex and race. These data indicate that more than half of the seventh grade dropouts (56 percent) were male and less than half (35 percent) of the eighth grade dropouts were male. While more than 60 percent of the students enrolled are black, only 48 percent of the dropouts were black. This proportion varied between the two grades with only 43 percent of the seventh grade dropouts being black.

When sex and race are combined, it shows some variations for the two grades. First, of the 75 seventh grade dropouts, the largest proportion are non-black males (40 percent), followed by black females (27 percent). Black males and other females were the least likely to drop out. Of the 113 eighth grade dropouts, the largest proportion were black females, followed by other females. Other females accounted for 21 percent of the dropouts. Black males accounted for the smallest share of these dropouts--13 percent.

3. *For what reasons did students leave school?*

The number of dropouts by reason are reported on Table II. Overall, the largest number of dropouts are students who are placed in institutions, followed by pregnant students, lost students, runaways, and expelled students. Each of these categories accounted for more than five percent of the dropouts. The order of significance and the actual proportion varied by grade level. The three causes accounting for the most seventh grade dropouts are: institutional placement (37 percent), lost to the system (27 percent), and pregnant (13 percent). The three highest ranked causes of eighth graders leaving are: pregnancy (32 percent), institutional placement (27 percent), and lost to the system (15 percent).

Program implications of these data suggest the following. The district has little control over institutionalized youth though they could advocate credited education courses for these youth. The data indicate that the needs of pregnant youth are real. This is one group for whom programming could be significant. High quality record-keeping on lost students is needed if this problem is to be addressed.

4. *Do the reasons students leave vary by sex?*

Table III reports data on reasons by sex that seventh and eighth graders drop out. As seen in Part A of Table III, male seventh graders drop out for four reasons: institutional placement, lost, runaway, or expelled. Female

students leave for these reasons, and pregnancy and temporary excuse. There is little variation in the number who are counted as dropouts because they are lost, expelled, or a runaway. The two groups differ in that males are much more frequently institutionalized and females are pregnant.

When reasons by sex that eighth graders drop out are reviewed (Part B of Table III), there are some changes in the differences by sex. Institutional placement affects males and females equally. The fact that so many more females than males drop out is due to the very large number of pregnant females and the large number of females that run away.

Personal crisis situations account for most dropouts in these two grades for both males and females. However, personal crisis tends to intensify for females by eighth grade. Special attention should be focused on this group if schools are to help.

5. *Do the reasons students drop out vary by race?*

Table IV reports reasons by race for dropouts from grades seven and eight. Students are identified as black or other. The majority of dropouts (57 percent) in seventh grade are other and the majority (52 percent) in eighth grade are black.

Most black seventh grade dropouts leave school for three reasons: institutional placement, lost and pregnancy. The number is almost equally divided among these three reasons. The top three reasons other students leave are institutional placement, lost and runaway. The single largest reason is institutional placement. In fact, this category accounts for much of the difference in the number of dropouts by race. It affects more than twice as many other students than black students. Another major difference by race is that there were nine black dropouts for pregnancy compared to only one other dropout for this reason. These data indicate that personal crisis which dominates why all

seventh graders leave applies regardless of race. The crisis, however, varies some with institutionalization affecting more other students and pregnancy affecting proportionately more black students.

The relative significance of different categories of dropouts varies little by race for eighth graders. The major difference at this grade level is that proportionately almost twice as large a share of black students than other students drop out because of pregnancy. This helps explain why black females are the largest group of eighth grade dropouts. Another difference by race is the number of other students who are at least 16 and have a work permit. This does not appear to be a choice for black students while 11 percent of the other eighth graders left for this reason.

TABLE I

DROPOUT STATISTICS FOR SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADERS

CLEVELAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1981-1982 School Year

Totals

	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total
Total Number of Dropouts	75	113	188
Total Number Male	42	39	81
Males as Percent of Grade Total	56%	35%	43%
Number Black	32	59	91
Black as Percent of Grade Total	43%	52%	48%
Number Black Male	12	15	27
Number Black Female	20	44	65
Number Other Male	30	24	54
Number Other Female	13	30	43
Percent of All Dropouts in the Grade That Are:			
Black Male	16%	13%	14%
Black Female	27%	39%	34%
Other Male	40%	21%	29%
Other Female	17%	27%	23%
	100%	100%	100%

TABLE II

REASONS THAT STUDENTS DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL BY GRADE

Cleveland Public Schools, 1981-82

	7th Grade		8th Grade		7th & 8th Grade	
Reason	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Institutional Placement	28	37%	30	27%	58	
Lost to the System	22	29%	17	15%	39	
Pregnancy	10	13%	36	32%	46	
Runaway	8	11%	11	10%	19	
Work Permit	0	0%	6	5%	6	
Expulsion	6	8%	9	8%	15	
Overage	0	0%	1	2%	1	
Marriage	0	0%	2	2%	2	
Temporary Excuse	1	1%	1	1%	2	
TOTAL	75	100%	113	100%	188	

TABLE III

REASONS BY SEX THAT STUDENTS DROPPED OUT OF CLEVELAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1981-1982 School Year

	(A) SEVENTH GRADERS						(B) EIGHTH GRADERS					
	Number			Percent			Number			Percent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Inst. Placement	24	4	28	57%	12%	37%	16	14	30	41%	19%	27%
Lost to System	10	12	22	24%	36%	29%	8	8	17	23%	11%	15%
Pregnancy	0	10	10	0%	30%	13%	0	36	36	0%	49%	32%
Runaway	4	4	8	10%	12%	11%	1	10	11	3%	14%	10%
Work Permit	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%	5	1	5	13%	1%	5%
Expulsion	4	2	6	10%	6%	8%	7	2	9	18%	3%	8%
Overage	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%	1	0	1	3%	0%	2%
Marriage	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%	0	2	2	0%	3%	2%
Temp. Excuse	0	1	1	0%	3%	1%	0	1	1	0%	1%	1%
TOTAL	42	33	75	101%	99%	100%	39	74	113	100%	101%	101%

TABLE IV

REASONS BY RACE THAT STUDENTS DROPPED OUT OF CLEVELAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1981-1982 School Year

	(A) SEVENTH GRADERS						(B) EIGHTH GRADERS					
	Number			Percent			Number			Percent		
	Black	Other	Total	Black	Other	Total	Black	Other	Total	Black	Other	Total
Inst. Placement	8	20	28	25%	47%	37%	13	17	30	22%	31%	27%
Lost to System	8	14	22	25%	33%	29%	7	10	17	12%	19%	15%
Pregnancy	9	1	10	28%	2%	13%	24	12	36	41%	22%	32%
Runaway	3	5	8	9%	12%	11%	7	4	11	12%	7%	10%
Work Permit	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%	0	6	6	0%	11%	5%
Expulsion	3	3	6	9%	7%	8%	6	3	9	10%	6%	8%
Overage	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%	1	0	1	2%	0%	1%
Marriage	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%	0	2	2	0%	4%	2%
Temp. Excuse	1	0	1	3%	0%	1%	1	0	1	2%	0%	1%
TOTAL	32	43	75	100%	100%	99%	59	54	113	101%	100%	101%